

Africa-Europe Week



TOGETHER.
TOMORROW.
TODAY.

#AFRICA
#EU
#CULTURE

REWRITING THE NARRATIVE: AFRICA-EUROPE DIALOGUE

17 FEBRUARY 2022, 9-11AM CET



CREACT4MED
CREATIVE MEDITERRANEAN



Preamble:

As an outcome of multiple conversations between Professor Rym Ayadi and Jihan El Tahri, it was concluded that the shifting reality of the cultural and creative sectors in the face of technological advancements, compounded by the impact of COVID-19, needed to be addressed differently. At this critical moment of readjustment within the cultural sector, the very nature of engagement between Africa and Europe should be assessed and redefined in order to ensure the inclusion of alternative voices, open up a discussion at eye level, and propose ways of proceeding in the future.

With the recognition that the creative sector is a fundamental element of social cohesion, economic growth and development, it was concluded that a brainstorming session gathering visible cultural practitioners, economists, policymakers and academics would be fruitful within the context of the Africa-Europe Week. The gathering aimed to depict different successful local experiences that would expose the opportunities and challenges encountered by the creative sector on the African continent. Policymakers, economists and academics would engage with the practitioners to reflect on ways forward and together propose a set of recommendations.

CREACT4MED
CREATIVE MEDITERRANEAN

EMEA
EURO-MEDITERRANEAN ECONOMISTS ASSOCIATION

Africa-Europe Week
14-18 Feb. 2022

TOGETHER, TOMORROW. TODAY.

Moderator

Jihan El Tahri
DOX BOX

Entrepreneurs/Creatives

Najlaa El-Ageli
Noon Arts

Mane Cisneros
FCAT

Angèle Diabang
Karoninka

Anna Soler-Pont
Pontas Agency

Youssef Mechmech
Design Tounsi

Shahdan Safwan
Patchouli Home

Panelists

Kunle Afolayan
KAPTv and Golden Effects Pictures

Rym Ayadi
Euro-Mediterranean Economists Association

Moubarak Lô
Emergence Institute

Pier Luigi Sacco
University of Chieti-Pescara

Kofi Adomakoh
GCB Bank

Nagla Bahr
Credit Guarantee Company

Preparation:

An extensive list of creative entrepreneurs, artists, policy-makers, academics and finance actors from across the two continents was drawn up and contacted. Given the limited amount of time earmarked for the panel it was concluded that no more than 6 cultural practitioners and 6 panel members of policymakers, economists and academics should participate.

Questions to address:

The reality of the cultural space, particularly in the audiovisual sector, is in rapid mutation that has been accelerated and rethought since COVID-19. While such reflection is underway in most international cultural institutions, the reality on the African continent remains precarious for the cultural practitioner. Some initiatives on the continent could be highlighted as an example and a demonstration that sustainable cultural practices can be achieved. However, much of the success comes hand in hand with collaboration happening with partner European institutions. Is it sufficient to have a handful of success stories or can the very nature of collaboration be adjusted to widen the scope of success? What are the main issues that need to be addressed to rectify the current imbalance of African-European collaboration/partnerships?

To address these and other issues highlighted by cultural practitioners, case studies were selected to exemplify the situation and propose ways of collaboration for the future. The event, organized by EMEA, sought to hear individual experiences and connect them with economic thinkers and decisionmakers as a precursor for issuing recommendations.

The Event

February 17th 2022, 9:00 (CET)



Opening Note: Professor **Rym Ayadi**, Founder and President of EMEA.

In the opening note, Professor Rym Ayadi addressed the current phase of recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and how the EU-Africa partnership is essential to achieving a sustainable and inclusive recovery for both Africa and Europe. In view of this, EMEA is working to have cultural diversity, creativity and entrepreneurship as essential pillars for recovery and future prosperity. Within this context, Prof. Ayadi presented the CREAT4MED project, which seeks to strengthen businesses and create jobs within cultural and creative industries (CCI).



Moderator: **Jihan El-Tahri**, multi-award-winning film director, writer, visual artist and producer.

Jihan El-Tahri launched the discussion through the prism of the recent news about restituting African artworks, icons and artefacts that have been in European museums for almost a century. This debate has opened the door to re-examining the centrality of artistic creation to society's cohesion, spirituality and identity. But more so, it has put on the table the need to revise the very nature of the relationship between the creators from the South and the institutions in the North. Despite the exponential growth of the sector, local support lags behind and international funding has become an essential ingredient enabling artists to produce. Today's panel will expose success stories and challenges faced to help reflect on how to further engage a dialogue of how to amend the way Africans and Europeans can better work together in the future.

The floor was then opened to the Creative Participants.

It is worthy to note that the choice of creatives was carefully selected to reflect various different aspects of the sector, each with its own reality that differs quite profoundly from one creative domain to the other. The choice to select prominent individuals from the contemporary arts, the film festival circuit, film production, literature, design and finally a multimedia production hub, aimed to cover the overlapping opportunities and challenges despite the specificities of each experience which were recounted in depth.

Creative Participants



Najlaa Elageli, Libya , Founder of Noon Arts.

Elageli's experience is of particular interest since she converted from a successful career in architecture to launching the only contemporary arts gallery dedicated primarily to Libyan arts, but also widening the scope to the Arab/African region and the Mediterranean. Elageli's experience in working with a war zone was compounded by the difficulties faced to securing funds to launch projects that presented an alternative view from the region. Her move towards the art world and cultural production was primarily fueled by the belief that such visual language bridges the gap of understanding and highlights the similarities that need to be underlined. Elageli gave a detailed account of some of the exhibitions she has hosted, notably 'Pop Art from North Africa', with a collective of 19 artists from North Africa exploring the phenomenon of Pop Art; and 'Retracing A Disappearing Landscape', featuring another collective of 18 artists with a link to Libya, addressing collective memory and personal histories relating to modern day Libya. Noon Arts continued to grow and, working from London, opened its space to working with the diaspora as well. Elageli stressed that her recommendation would be to intensify cultural exchange between the countries of the Mediterranean shore. The interconnections between works of the artists demonstrate the links between spaces as well as between past and present.



Mane Cisneros, Spain, Founder and Director of the African Film Festival of Tarifa.

The particularity of this festival is that it is the only festival to take place both in Europe and in Africa at the same time. Tarifa, being only 14 miles from Tangiers, has allowed her to build this cultural bridge between the two continents for almost a decade. The Tarifa Film Festival also translates selected African films into Spanish, which has been a vital opening for African narratives to venture into the Hispanic countries. Cisneros' work is based on the diffusion of cinematography of the African continent and its diaspora in Latin America. She created Cinenomada and Mobile Entertainment, two devices aimed at reinforcing the dissemination of African cinema. She explained the reasoning for which she decided to create a digital cinema network in Mozambique and to support a network of African film festivals dedicated to the promotion and dissemination of the documentary genre. Cisneros described the main challenges she has faced, namely preconceived stereotypes and biases, the consideration that African cinema is of lower quality, the lack of media interest, the lack of funding for projects, and the consistently short-term policies

implemented by often-changing governments. She noted that medium- and long-term policies would be crucial to building sustainable projects, and the creativity should be present at all levels, especially the political level.



Angèle Diabang, Senegal, Founder of Karoninka Prod - screenwriter, director and producer.

Diabang's films often deal with very local traditions that expand and reflect on universal topics like *Mon Beau Sourire*, which was acclaimed by international critics; followed by four other documentaries, including *Congo, un médecin pour sauver les femmes*, the first film about Doctor Denis Mukwege, winner of the 2018 Nobel Peace Prize. Diabang faced the same hardships as most African filmmakers trying to get international production companies to engage with African topics. She explained how she had to sideline her initial career as an editor to become a producer herself in order to see her film finished. Today her production company Karoninka is credited with over a dozen films. Helping other women finish their films allowed the company to be able to raise funds, and now she works more on production than on filmmaking. She noted the difficulties in realising francophone projects, and that funding and the link between Africa and Europe is essential.



Anna Soler-Pont, Spain, Founder of Pontas Literary & Film Agency – Literary agent.

Soler-Pont described how she got into translation of international literature and how from there she started providing a pioneer service as a literary agent, especially for film adaptations. The transformative moment for her was meeting women authors in Cairo, creating a desire to bridge different cultures through literature, seeking translation, publication and film adaptation for Arabic and African writers in Europe and the West. She underlined that gender issues remain stark, and stressed that male authors continue to earn much higher wages for the same work. Her agency always has a minimum of 70% female clients, and that the key to building a sustainable business in creative sectors is to not lose sight of the business aspects.



Youssef Mechmech, Tunisia, Founder of Design Tounsi.

Mr. Mechmech described his trajectory that took him from studying and working in France to returning home to create the first alternative platform in Tunisia dedicated to the development and democratization of the profession of designer. He described how the concept of design was lacking in the region and recognized the extent of cultural differences within the design sector on each side of the Mediterranean, and began to run events for students in Tunisia designed to break down these cultural barriers. He underlined the lack of information on design culture, the designer's profession and its impact on society and businesses in Tunisia.



Kunle Afolayan, Nigeria, Filmmaker and Founder of Kap Hub motion pictures and creative hub.

Afolayan is a star in the industry, having managed to create a successful and ever-growing hub that focuses mainly on motion picture, but generates income from various subsidiary ventures related to the film industry including equipment rentals, costume design and events. Afolayan explained how he managed to raise money from friends and family to make his first film, which went on to win awards. He used the visibility and clout brought on by the award to create a sustainable production company with its own equipment and studio. Afolayan's collaboration with AirFrance, which agreed to screen his productions on their flights, was followed by a slate deal with Netflix. The steady stream of income has been vital for his hub's growth. He reiterated that running his cultural program as a business was what allowed him to invest in non-profit making initiatives like training programs in production and post-production for local youth. Kunle often states that his hub aims to replicate the US studio model, which does not exist on the continent. African films have tended to get financing from European partners mainly if they are the auteur genre predominant in West Africa. The arrival of the platforms like Netflix, Amazon and Hulu have changed the nature of the game and have opened the door to series production, which he is now involved with.

Panel of Experts

After the presentations by the Creative Participants, the panel of experts was asked to give an overview of what they thought was of interest and what they would like to comment on or seek further clarifications.



Nagla Bahr, Egypt, Managing Director of the Credit Guarantee Company.

Ms. Bahr has more than 30 years of experience in finance, economic development and strategic planning, with a focus on emerging markets development. She first commented on some of the initiatives and noted the impact of culture on societies at large. She explained the economic implications of the cultural sector and how supporting it financially actually benefits the economy at large, thus the need to support cultural initiatives through regular financial tools. She mentioned the diversity of cultures, histories and ways of thinking across Africa, and the need to build a systemically sustainable industry that supports all creators, instead of one or two exceptions. She noted the need for business thinking as well as creative passion, and the need to be able to attract funding, despite the large upfront costs and high level of uncertainty inherent in creative endeavours. She suggested that guarantees could play a role in mitigating some of the risk of investment, and that a platform with a mix of investors, grants, bonds and guarantee schemes could offer access to finance and technical assistance to creatives to enable them to turn their creativity into viable businesses.



Moubarak Lo, Senegal, President of the Emergence Institute.

Mr. Lo is the former Special Advisor to the Prime Minister of Senegal, and the President of the Emergence Institute, specializing in economic and statistical studies and strategic planning. He is also Director General of the Economic Foresight Bureau. Previously, he was Deputy Director in the Cabinet of Macky Sall, President of Senegal. He also served as an economic advisor to several Prime Ministers. He is an expert for the UN, the African Development Bank, the World Bank and the African Union. Mr. Lo spoke about his background and highlighted how this vast experience helped him to reflect on how to integrate the cultural dimension into development. Mr. Lo detailed various examples, particularly in some Asian countries, that have successfully integrated culture into management. Such examples serve to show that cultural sustainability allows the creation of true cultural

industries which can foster creation and creative production. Mr. Lo spoke about attempts of countries from the South to support local cinema production. He highlighted the example of the subsidy fund for cinema that exists in Senegal (FOPICA). FOPICA was created 5 years ago and has made a clear difference in film production; he underlined that there is a need for similar support institutions regionally since local support creates trust for creators and filmmakers to enable them to mobilise funding. He mentioned that local and regional support for creators and directors must be increased so that the industry does not rely solely on international help and subsidies.



Professor Pier Luigi Sacco, Italy, Professor of Cultural Economics.

Prof. Pier Luigi Sacco is Senior Advisor to the OECD Center for Entrepreneurship, SMEs, Regions, and Cities, Associate Researcher at CNR-ISPC, Naples, Professor of Cultural Economics, University of Chieti-Pescara, and Senior Researcher at the metaLAB (at) Harvard. He is the Special Adviser of the European Commissioner for Education and Culture, member of the European Research Advisory Board of the Economics of Culture Committee of the Italian Ministry of Culture. He also works and consults internationally in the fields of culture-led local development. Pr. Sacco gave an overview of how the cultural sector is clearly geared towards a Western-dominated narrative. He spoke about the need for a shift allowing the integration of alternative voices as part of the global cultural and creative ecosystem. He underlined that it is not simply about making space for African voices but creating a fully African industry to balance Western mainstream culture, and that new input and resources coming from the South should not be overlooked. He suggested that a principal challenge is the limited understanding by policymakers that cultural and creative production can be a main pillar for development.



Professor Rym Ayadi, Tunisia/Spain, Founder and President of the Euro–Mediterranean Economists Association (EMEA).

Prof. Ayadi is the Director of the CREAT4MED project and Director of the EU-Mediterranean and African Network for Economic Studies (EMANES). She is Senior Advisor at the Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS); Professor at the Bayes Business School, City University of London and Member of the Centre for Banking Research (CBR); Academic member and Chair of the European Banking Authority – Banking Stakeholders Group (EBA- BSG). She is also Associated Scholar at the Centre for Relationship Banking and Economics (CERBE) at LUMSA University in Rome. Prof. Ayadi wrapped up the panel discussion first by

commenting of Mr. Kunle Afolayan's example, saying how building a cultural initiative from the bottom up was inspiring and underpinned the importance of mainstreaming success strategies like Kunle's, built on a clear vision and action plan to manage the risk. Prof. Ayadi spoke about the Europe-Africa partnership and joined her voice to the analysis and recommendations proposed to adjust the terms of engagement. She underlined that it is urgent for decisionmakers to take into consideration the fact that the creative and cultural economy should be a pillar for development, self-expression, social transformation and value creation, and that steps should be taken to close the awareness gap between policymakers and the situation on the ground.

A Q&A exchange engaging the cultural practitioners and the panel of experts singled out various aspects and challenges facing the cultural industry that need to be addressed and refined in order to be presented as a set of recommendations to be submitted to the EU-African Union Summit as an outcome of this event.

The following recommendations were drafted and signed by all participants:

1. To formally recognize culture, creativity and the cultural creative industry as pillars for inclusive, sustainable and resilient economic development post COVID-19 recovery in Africa;
2. To set up a regional fund dedicated to cultural creative industry (CCI) in Africa, with guarantees and co-guarantees under the EU's Multi Annual Financial Framework. The CCI fund will be under a joint EU-AU oversight and will have a joint administration from the African Development Bank (ADB), the European Investment Bank (EIB) and should be open to others to join. The CCI fund will provide direct funding to support entrepreneurs in the CCI, will refinance established and new local African schemes with concessionary rates and will provide capacity building including digital open access training and capitalizing on best practices to accelerate the development of the African ecosystem;
3. To enhance the financial sustainability of the implementing institutions of cultural and creative initiatives and projects via a dedicated support under the CCI fund;
4. To multiply and extend the regional initiatives and multi-stakeholders innovation platforms and hubs such as CREAT4MED to ensure there are digital and physical market places and targeted regional events for CCI actors including new talents in Europe and Africa to meet, connect, co-create, collaborate, cooperate, build synergies and prosper.

END OF REPORT

Prepared by: Jihan El Tahri